

## Do They Really Use More Tag Questions?

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### Abstract

Tag questions are a feature of what Lakoff (1975) calls "women's language", and women by using them more than men project themselves as weak and uncertain. However, studies show inconsistent findings. This paper presents the findings of a study that examined whether the use of tag questions in the academic context might be more inclined to members of one gender. If so, what forms of tag questions are most frequently used and what are their functions? Furthermore, it is also important for us to realize the extent to which the speaker feels the use of tag questions affect her or his confidence level. The findings of this study show that the common myths of archetypal stereotypes regarding the use of tag questions and women, and the relationship between the use of tag questions and low confidence level may be unfounded.

### 1.0 Introduction

In general "language and gender oriented research has associated women with questions in negative ways" (Coates, 1996, p. 200). Some studies have established the fact that women use more tag questions than men. The ideological assumption for this was and in many cases still is the fact that, when compared with men, women are considered to be less powerful members of our society. It may be this assumption that led Lakoff (1975) to observe the language of men and women and make her famous claim that "tag questions that do not seek information are not 'legitimate', and that such questions are typical of women speakers and are an expression of tentativeness (and of femininity)" (Coates, 1996, p. 200). However, in recent years discourse analysts have proposed that "questions are in fact potentially powerful linguistic forms" and different studies have shown that "powerful speakers, such as magistrates, doctors, teachers, and presenters of TV discussion programmes, use more questions than less powerful speakers" (Coates, 1996, p. 200) (See Table 2).

Among the numerous claims Lakoff (1975) makes the statement that women use more tag questions than men and by doing so, they project themselves as weak and uncertain. However, her claims were based on intuition and introspection. Following her claims in *Language and Women's Place* (1975), a series of empirical studies have been conducted which have yielded inconsistent findings and further studies have revealed that the use of tag questions is dependent not only on gender but also on many linguistic and extra-linguistic factors such as context, situation, intention, culture and variety of English. The whole process would thus appear to be far more complex than Lakoff had originally comprehended, and cannot be generalized by mere intuition (as she had done) without conducting proper empirical studies. It is therefore necessary for us to empirically explore the use of tag questions in all forms and functions pertaining to all contexts, and not merely confine our ideas to any generalized archetypal stereotypes.

The use of tag questions in specific contexts such as the academic context is an issue which needs to be looked into. In fact, research in the use of tag questions in the academic context is so limited that it can almost be perceived as negligible; and what is more, is the fact that no significant research, up to date, on this topic has been carried out in the Malaysian context. Hence, in the light of this it is important for us to consider whether the use of tag questions might be inclined to one gender only. If so, what forms of tag questions are most commonly used and how they are used. Furthermore, it is also important for us to realize the extent to which the speaker feels the use of tag questions affects her or his confidence level in the academic context.



### 1.1 Research Questions

This paper seeks to address the following research questions with specific reference to the academic context:

1. Do women or men (lecturers and tertiary level students) use more tag questions in the academic context?
2. Which types or forms of tag question are most frequently used and what are their functions in the academic context?
3. To what extent does the speaker feel the use of tag questions affects her or his confidence level in the academic context?

### 1.2 Definition of Key Terms

The important key terms for this study are defined below.

**Academic context:** In general, academic context refers to the physical, temporal and psychosocial situations that underlie language use in public and private tertiary educational institutions. Within this study, academic context refers to the lecture situations in Universiti Putra Malaysia, International Islamic University Malaysia and Tunku Abdul Rahman College.

**Conformative:** *Conformative* refers to the type or form of tag question that is used to request the agreement of an addressee or the audience. This type of tag question is audience-oriented and takes for granted the acknowledgement of the addressee or audience. In other words, when using a *conformative* tag question the speaker is quite certain of her or his opinion or idea put forward and simply takes for granted that the audience or addressee has understood this. In such a case, the speaker does not wait or even want a response from the audience.

The term *conformative* should not be confused with *confirmative*. *Conformative* is derived from the word *conform*, which means to agree with, while *confirmative* is derived from *confirm*, which means to verify. In other words, by using the *conformative* tag question the speaker wants the audience to agree with what she or he is saying.

**Responsive:** *Responsive* refers to the type or form of tag question that is used to invite the response of an addressee or the audience. This is also an audience-oriented tag question. This type of tag question simply seeks a yes or no response or opinion from the addressee or audience. When using a responsive tag question (like the *conformative*) the speaker is quite certain of her or his opinion or idea put forward, but invites the audience to respond in order to assure (herself or himself) that she or he has been understood. Holmes (1984, 1995) has categorised this type of tag question as *facilitative*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Facilitative* tags are examples of hedges that serve as positive politeness devices by inviting the addressee to contribute to the discourse, for instance:

Host, Fiona, to Tom, guest at her dinner party.

Fiona: you've got a new job Tom haven't you? (Holmes, 1995, p. 81)



**Information seeking<sup>2</sup>:** *Information seeking* refers to the type or form of tag question that is used to seek information from an addressee or the audience because the speaker is uncertain. This type of tag question generates uncertainty or doubt in the speaker's mind regarding the opinion of the audience or whether they have understood her or him. In such a case the speaker seeks the explanation or opinion of the audience or addressee, in order to clarify her or his state of uncertainty or doubt. Holmes (1984, 1995) calls this type of tag question *modal<sup>3</sup>* and later *epistemic modal*.

## 2.0 Literature Review

Though the turning point of the modern feminist movement dates back to more than half a century ago, research on 'language and gender', from the perspective of "the role language plays in the location and maintenance of women in a disadvantageous position in society" (Fasold, 1990, p. 89), began in the mid-1970s. "The study of language and gender was initiated in 1975 by three books: *Male/Female Language* (Mary Ritchie Key), *Language and Women's Place* (Robin Lakoff), and *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance* (Barrie Thorne & Nancy Henley, Eds.)" (Freeman & McElhinny, in McKay and Hornberger, 1996, p. 218). Of the three, the most influential and probably critically deconstructed is Lakoff's book. Lakoff's "widely influential study of language-use features was presented ... first in a journal article and later in a book, both under the title 'Language and Women's Place'" (Lakoff, 1973a, 1975). Lakoff's work led her to conclude that 'women's language'—by which she meant both language used to describe women and language typically used by women—had the overall effect of submerging a woman's personal identity" (Lakoff, 1973a, p. 48, in Fasold, 1990, pp. 102-3). However, linguists have been most critical of her work because of the lack of empirical insight, which she admits:

[t]he data on which I am basing my claims have been gathered mainly by introspection: I have examined my own speech and that of my acquaintances, and have used my own intuitions in analyzing it. I have also made use of the media: in some ways, the speech heard, for example, in commercials or situation comedies on television mirrors the speech of the television-watching community: if it did not (not necessarily as an exact replica, but perhaps as a reflection of how the audience sees itself or wishes it were), it would not succeed (Lakoff, 1973, in Roman, Juhasz, & Miller, 1994, p. 281).

Although work on language in terms of gender began much earlier than the 1970s and despite the fact that a number of scholars wrote on the issue, it was Robin Lakoff's 1975 paperback (Harper and Row), *Language and Women's Place*, that really opened the public's eyes. She suggested a list of features (in American Mainstream English), which could identify women's speech from men's. What was interesting was that Lakoff's list of *linguistic* characteristics could be tested. In the list, she claimed that women generally use more tag questions than men, as a result of which researchers began to investigate the issue.

<sup>2</sup>The study necessitates the coinage of the following terms: *conformative*, *responsive* and *information seeking*.

<sup>3</sup>Holmes (1984) analyses tags according to whether they express primarily **modal** or **affective** meaning. Tags with primarily modal meaning signal the speaker's degree of certainty about the proposition expressed: (Husband to wife concerning expected guest)

*She's coming around noon isn't she?*

Such tags can be described as **speaker-oriented** since they ask the addressee to confirm the speaker's proposition (Coates, 1993, p. 120).



The results were confusing and contradictory: some researchers found that women do use more tag questions than men; few found no difference in men's and women's use of tag questions; some found men use more tag questions than women (Elgin, 1993, p. 5). The early researchers seemed to focus on the total number of tag questions used rather than the form and function and the context they were used in, which however, was not taken for granted by the later researchers.

Lakoff's claims regarding tag questions were based on, what one might call, 'armchair intuition' rather than empirical studies. According to Lakoff's hypothesis, it seems that women who frequently use the features of her so-called *women's language* are weak, unassertive and lack authority. Freeman et al. McElhinny (in McKay & Hornberger, 1996, p. 232) divide women's language into three categories, as described by Lakoff:

1. it lacks the resources that would enable women to express themselves strongly;
2. it encourages women to talk about trivial subjects; and
3. it requires women to speak tentatively.

Among the earlier empirical research that seem to support Lakoff's claim regarding the use of tag questions were conducted by Hartman (1976), Siegler & Siegler (1976), McMillan et al. (1977) and Fishman (1980). Hartman (1976, in Smith 1985, pp. 152-153), who analysed the recorded interviews of elderly citizens of the State of Maine in the United States, found women used slightly more tag questions than men. Siegler (1976) in Coates, 1993, p. 119) gave students sentences to analyse, some of which were assertions with tag questions, and then asked them to segregate the sentences according to gender. The results supported Lakoff's hypothesis. McMillan et al. (1977, in Thorne & Henley, 1983, p. 13; Holmes, 1995, p. 84) studied the speech of college students assigned to discussion groups. Their findings revealed that among other things women used more tag questions than men. Fishman (1980, in Thorne et al., 1983, p. 268) studied the conversations of three heterosexual couples at home. His findings were similar to the findings of McMillan et al.

Some studies (see for e.g. Baumann, 1976; Hartman, 1976) found no difference among members of both gender with regard to the use of tag questions. Baumann (1976, in Thorne et al., 1983, p. 13) studied the features of women's speech in the classroom setting and found that women and men used about the same number of tag questions. She suggested the need to study actual speech and to note the functions of their features before making generalizations about women's speech (p. 239). Hartman (1976, in Smith, 1985, p. 153) carried out a second study in which the recordings of academic and non-academic speech (including an office meeting, a women's discussion group and graduate seminars) were analysed. This time the findings revealed that speakers of each sex used almost equal proportions of tag questions.

Those research that seemed to contradict Lakoff's hypothesis were conducted by Dubois and Crouch (1975), Crouch and Dubois (1977), Lapadat and Seesahai (1977) and Johnson (1980). Dubois and Crouch (1975, in Thorne et al., 1983, p. 13; in Smith, 1985, p. 152; in Holmes, 1995, p. 84) analysed the tape recordings of mixed-sex interactions of a small academic professional conference where men used 33 tag questions while women used none. In another study Crouch and Dubois (1977, in Smith, 1985, p. 152) analysed the recorded materials from a university graduate seminar for the occurrence of tag questions among other features. On this occasion their findings also contradicted Lakoff's findings; on analysing the data of 50 females and 67 males it was found that the use of tag questions was more prominent among the male graduate students. Lapadat and Seesahai (1976, in Thorne et al., 1983, p. 243; in Holmes, 1995, 84) compared the results of all-male and all-female conversations in a university dormitory. They (1976, in Thorne et al., 1983, p. 13)



found that men used twice as many tag questions as women do. Johnson's (1980, in Thorne *et al.*, 1983, p. 272) study involved the analysis of four mixed-sex meetings of engineers and designers in an industrial corporation. The findings revealed that the male leader used most of the tag questions with role, purpose, and intent - not gender - affecting the patterns of questioning.

The different conclusions of these studies may suggest that since the data were gathered under natural circumstances the conditions for making a comparative study between the genders were not equal as they were beyond the control of the researcher. In other words, the number of male and female participants may not have been proportionate or the participants may not have been of the same rank and position, which could have had an effect on their responses due to a power inequality.

The earlier researchers seemed to concern themselves more with the 'overall' gender-specific use of tag questions. However, later researchers such as Holmes (1984), Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary (1989) laid more emphasis on form and function (Table 1), rather than the total number of tag questions used. As Thorne *et al.* (1983, p. 13) correctly point out, "[t]he study of isolated variables almost invariably leads to further questions about the effects of setting, topic, roles, and other social factors that may interact with gender."

It was Holmes (1984, in Coates & Cameron, 1989, p. 81) who pointed out the importance of studying form and function in the context of the discourse that they occur.

Most investigators have simply counted linguistic forms and compared the totals for women vs. men with very little discussion of the functions of the forms in the context of the discourse in which they occur (in Coates & Cameron, 1989, p. 81).

Holmes (1984) analyzed tag questions in terms of *modals* (*speaker-oriented*) and *affectives* (*addressee-oriented*). Though her findings suggest that women do use slightly more tag questions than men, the overall distribution is quite interesting (see Table 1) and "the important point to notice is that 59 per cent of the tags used by women are facilitative (compared with 25 per cent for men) while 61 per cent of the tags used by men are modal, expressing uncertainty (compared with 35 per cent for women)," (Coates, 1993, p. 121). The findings also suggest that men used slightly more softening tag questions (13%) than women (6%).

Lakoff's concept of tag questions has generated quite a lot of criticism: Deborah Cameron, Fiona McAlinden and Kathy O'Leary accuse Lakoff of naivete in assuming that one linguistic form correlates with one function. Specifically challenging Lakoff's evaluation of tags, they argue for a finer contextually sensitive analysis of female discourse (Jackson *et al.* 1993, p. 421).

<sup>4</sup>Holmes (1984) analyses tags according to whether they express primarily **modal** or **affective** meaning. Tags with primarily modal meaning signal the speaker's degree of certainty about the proposition expressed: (Husband to wife concerning expected guest)

*She's coming around noon isn't she?*

Such tags can be described as **speaker-oriented** since they ask the addressee to confirm the speaker's proposition (Coates, 1993, p. 120).

<sup>5</sup> When dealing with a sensitive issue, hedging dampens or reduces the force, intensity or directness of face-threatening talk by inviting the addressee to contribute to the discourse: (Wife to husband viewing food on kitchen floor)

*well that wasn't the best bit of plumbing you've ever done ↓was it?* (Holmes, 1995, p. 75)

<sup>6</sup> Tags whose primary function is **affective** express the speaker's attitude to the addressee (and therefore **addressee-oriented**). They do this either by supporting the addressee (facilitative tags): (Teacher to pupil)

*The hen's brown isn't she?*

or by softening the force of negatively affective speech acts: (Older child to younger friend)

*That was pretty silly wasn't it?* (Coates, 1993, p. 120)



They (Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary) go on to say that there is no clear-cut relationship between a tag and its function; the function of a tag depends on who uses it to whom, in what context and for what intention or reason. It does not necessarily have to indicate or signal nervousness or a "request for confirmation of information about which the speaker is uncertain (modal tags<sup>4</sup>) but can be used to mitigate face-threatening<sup>5</sup> talk or to express solidarity, encouraging interlocutors to engage in the discourse (affective tags<sup>6</sup>). They also say that women do not always use more tags than men, but do admit that women usually use more affective tags to frequently facilitate their conversations. It could be said that, what Lakoff defined as "powerless and weak in female language, then, is now redefined as a valuable interactional skill" (Jackson et al., 1993, p. 405).

On the other hand, the findings from the study conducted by Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary (in Coates & Cameron, 1989, p. 85), based on the 45,000 words sampled from the London Survey of English Usage (SEU) also proved to be interesting. When comparing these results with Holmes' (1984) (see Table 1), it seemed that the finding for the use of *modal* tags question was consistent but the *facilitative* was not. The overall finding from Holmes' study showed that women used more tag questions than men while the reverse was true for the SEU study by Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary.

Table 1 shows a comparison of the findings from Holmes' study and that of the findings from the Survey of English Usage (SEU) carried out by Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary.

**Table 1: Tag questions in casual conversation**

Holmes 1984			Survey of English Usage (SEU)	
Types of tag questions	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>Modal</b>	18(35%)	24(61%)	9(25%)	24(40%)
<b>Affective</b>				
<b>Facilitative</b>	30(59%)	10(25%)	27(75%)	36(60%)
<b>Softener</b>	3(6%)	5(13%)	—	—
<b>Total</b>	51	39	36	60

(Source: Cameron, et al., in Coates & Cameron, 1989, p. 85)

However, in their (et al.) opinion the inconsistency in the finding may have been caused by an interesting factor that they had discovered:

three speakers in our sample texts had been aware that recording was taking place, and these speakers — two of whom were men — had abnormally high scores for facilitative tags. It may be that their speech reflected a concern to elicit as much talk as possible from other participants, in order to generate as much data as possible for the Survey. In other words, these speakers had either consciously or unconsciously taken on the role of conversational 'facilitator'. If their contribution were discounted altogether, the incidence of facilitative tags among men would fall by around 6 per cent (though this is not enough to account for the considerable difference between our results and Holmes) (Cameron, et al., in Coates & Cameron, 1989, pp. 85-6).



However, Holmes's findings are supported by another study on tag questions (see Table 2) conducted by Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary (in Coates & Cameron, 1989, p. 89), which "looked at gender differences in tag usage in both symmetrical and asymmetrical discourse. In asymmetrical discourse (i.e. in discourse where participants are not equal in status), the striking finding was that powerless participants *never* used affective tags (Table 2)" and "[i]t seems that affective tags are associated with *powerful* speakers, a finding which challenges Lakoff's assumption that tags are intrinsically weak" (Coates, 1993, pp. 121-22).

**Table 2: Tag questions in unequal encounters**

	Women		Men	
	Powerful	Powerless	Powerful	Powerless
<b>Modal</b>	3 (5%)	9 (15%)	10 (18%)	16 (29%)
<b>Affective</b>				
Facilitative	43 (70%)	0 -	25 (45%)	0 -
Softeners	6 (10%)	0 -	4 (7%)	0 -
<b>Total</b>	61		55	

(Cameron, et al., in Coates & Cameron, 1989, p. 89)

With regard to the use of tag questions and confidence level of the speaker, Crawford (1995, p. 45) in an example from Edwards and Potter (1992, p. 117), taken from the court testimony of Mandy Rice-Davies, a witness during the Profumo scandal of 1963 in Britain (which involved prostitution and espionage), illustrates that tag questions may not only be used by a woman to express her own opinion in a confident way but also in a way which would put her in a more credible position.

*Counsel:* Are you aware that Lord Astor denies any impropriety in his relationship with you?

*Rice-Davies:* Well, he would, wouldn't he?

(Prolonged laughter from jury and spectators)

Mandy Rice-Davies, by the use of the tag question *wouldn't he?*, not only undermines the counsel's allegation that she must be lying about her sexual relationship with Lord Astor, but also manages to turn the table on the counsel by her ironic use of the tag question. The laughter generated by her response is indicative of her confidence and the more Lord Astor denies the relationship, the more credible her account of the relationship seems.

Cameron (1992, p. 72) points out that Lakoff had labelled the type of tag question that is frequently used by women, to express their lack of confidence in stating a claim, as 'illegitimate'. She illustrates, in light of Lakoff's claim, by stating that if the speaker had any confidence, why would she say for instance, *that's a good book, isn't it?* instead of merely *that's a good book*. She goes on to say that according to Holmes, such a tag functions not to undermine the speaker but to engage the hearer, in order to reassure that the speaker cares about the hearer's opinions too. In other words, she explains (p. 73):

[I]ike certain other 'women's language features', such as qualifiers, intensifiers, hesitations and so on, tags are hedging structures which qualify the force of an assertion so as not to intimidate, offend or exclude other points of view. This could be interpreted as polite and considerate



The use of tag questions between equals seems to correlate with conversational role rather than with gender itself and where participants are not equal in status some tag questions are used more often by powerful than by powerless participants". Coates (in Wodak, 1997, p. 251) says:

... both questions and tag questions function to draw speakers into conversation and to keep conversations going. They help us to check that we are still 'in tune' with each other, and allow us to ask for help when we're stuck for a word.... [m]oreover, they are a useful resource for speakers who are trying to protect their own face and that of their addressees: asking a question is much less threatening than making an assertion. We also use questions in the discussion of controversial topics to introduce a different point of view without overtly disagreeing with another speaker. In this way we maintain the collaborative floor.

Sometimes tag questions are also used to check what is assumed to be taken for granted, for instance if a woman says *it's strange isn't it? the life some people lead*, she does not expect an answer, but instead uses the tag as a way of confirming the shared world of a group of friends (Coates, in Wodak 1997, p. 252). In short, it could be said that tag questions are multi-functional and may be used to request the agreement of the addressee, invite response from the addressee, express threat, anger, suspicion, uncertainty, sarcasm and irony (Figure 1).

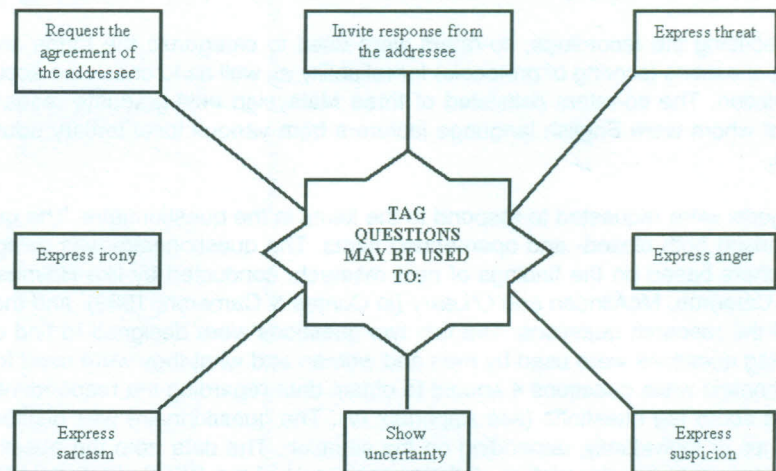


Figure 1: Various functions of Tag Questions<sup>7</sup>

### 3.0 Methodology

Due to the scarcity of information that is available regarding the use of tag questions in the academic context, the nature of this study is descriptive and exploratory. The study adopted a quantitative as well as a qualitative design. The study sample was made up of lecturers and students from the English Departments of Universiti Putra Malaysia, International Islamic University Malaysia and Tunku Abdul Rahman College. The data was collected by means of a questionnaire and natural recordings (of lectures and presentations). The non-probability sampling design was used, by which the subjects were chosen by quota sampling. The data were analysed statistically and descriptively and summarised in the form of tables and diagrams.

<sup>7</sup>The categories, to express various functions of tag questions, have been adapted from different sources (Coates 1993, 1996; Holmes, 1995; Lakoff, 1975; McArthur, 1992) and represented graphically so that they would be easily understood.



The setting of the study was in the academic arena, especially the lecture rooms of the English Language departments of various tertiary institutions (for example Universiti Putra Malaysia, International Islamic University Malaysia and Tunku Abdul Rahman College). Ten to fifteen minutes of lecture delivery and presentations of 40 subjects (20 male and 20 female) were recorded and transcribed (Appendix II). The recordings of lectures and presentations were made in their natural academic environment. The 40 subjects were part of the 80 to whom copies of a questionnaire were distributed. The questionnaire was also distributed to 80 respondents. The topics of the lectures and presentations were from the field of Applied Linguistics, Language and Media Communication, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and World Literature. The recordings were made before administering the written instrument (questionnaire), so as not to influence, either directly or indirectly, the responses of the respondents. The ten to fifteen minute time frame was chosen because some of the oral presentations of the post-graduate students only lasted that long. Hence, even though the lectures and some of the presentations lasted for longer periods of time, only ten to fifteen minutes of recording of each of the 40 participants were transcribed, in order to be able to analyse the data from a more or less equally comparable perspective. The transcriptions were made using the key to symbols of transcription annotation in Appendix II. The symbols ↓↑, ↑↓, \* \* and (( )) were based on / adapted from Stenström (1994) while the rest (L, S / Ss, Sx, ,, —, —, ⊗?, UPPERCASE, ..., ^ ^ ^, ⊙ ?, 1# 2# 3# etc., **bold?**, [N], [n], [nx], [nxx], (C), (R) and (IS) were constructed by the researchers.

When transcribing the recordings, co-raters were used to categorize the forms and functions of tag questions (scoring of protocols) for reliability as well as to check the accuracy of the transcription. The co-raters consisted of three Malaysian post-graduate research students, all of whom were English language lecturers from various local tertiary educational institutions.

Eighty subjects were requested to respond to the items in the questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised both closed- and open-ended items. The questionnaire was designed by the researchers based on the findings of past research, conducted by like Holmes (1984, 1995) and Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary (in Coates & Cameron, 1989), and the specifications of the research questions. The first two questions were designed to find out how frequently tag questions were used by men and women and what they were used for in the academic context while questions 4 sought to obtain data regarding the respondents' common beliefs about tag questions (see Appendix IV). The questionnaire was distributed either in groups or individually, depending on the situation. The data from the questionnaire were analysed using the descriptive statistics command of the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) programme for response frequencies first and then for tests of significance using a nonparametric test (Mann-Whitney U Test). The data from the recordings were also compiled, analysed and compared in terms of numerical values and percentages, so as to make the comparisons more explicit. The numerical values helped to distinguish the slight differences that were revealed by the data. The data from the recordings were compared with the questionnaire data in order to examine the extent to which there were differences between people's opinions regarding tag questions and how they used them in the academic context. The data were consequently compared gender-wise.



#### 4.0 Results and Discussion

From a general perspective, the findings suggest that women use slightly more tag questions than men in the academic context (See Appendix I— Tables 3 and 4-). This finding seems to support the findings of such authorities as Lakoff (1975), Holmes (1984, in Coates, 1993) and Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary (in Coates & Cameron, 1989). However, it must be mentioned that their studies did not focus specifically on the academic context, as this study did. It must also be mentioned that the difference between male and female use of tag questions in the academic context, as found in this study, is not significant (Table 5).

**Table 5: Statistical analysis of gender-based comparisons of questionnaire (Appendix IV) responses (Questions 1 and 2)**

Q. Item	Mode	RESPONSE CATEGORIES						Med- ian	Mean	Sig. (p)
		Frequently		Sometimes		Never				
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%			
1.	M	16	20.00	24	30.00	00	00.00	1	1.40	0.653
	F	18	25.50	22	27.50	00	00.00	1	1.45	
	Total	34	42.50	44	57.50	00	00.00	1	1.425	
2a.	M	25	31.25	14	17.50	01	01.25	2	1.600	0.196
	F	19	23.75	20	25.00	01	01.25	1	1.450	
	Total	44	55.00	34	42.50	02	02.50	1.5	1.525	
2b.	M	15	18.75	25	31.25	00	00.00	1	1.380	0.064
	F	24	30.00	15	18.75	01	01.25	2	1.580	
	Total	39	48.75	40	50.00	01	01.25	1.5	1.480	
2c.	M	11	13.75	24	30.00	05	06.25	1	1.150	0.391
	F	12	15.00	27	33.75	01	01.25	1	1.270	
	Total	23	28.75	51	63.75	06	07.50	1	1.210	

Where:

For mean and median— Frequently = 2  
 Sometimes = 1  
 Never = 0

Significant at  $p < 0.05$

In terms of the use of different types of tag questions the findings vary. For instance, the findings from the questionnaire suggest that men use tag questions to request the agreement of the addressee or audience more frequently than women, whereas the findings from the recordings suggest the contrary. Again, the questionnaire suggests that the frequency with which women use tag questions to invite response from the addressee or audience is greater than that of men, while the recordings suggest vice versa (See Appendix I - Tables 3, 4 and Table 5 above-). However, it must again be mentioned that the difference in the gender specific use of various types of tag questions is not significant (Table 5) and the findings might prove to be more revealing by widening the scope of the study. This result addresses research question 1.

If the results from tables 3 and 4 are compared with the results from table 2 they can be tabulated as follows (Table 6):



**Table 6: Comparison of types of tag questions used in this study (the academic context) with types of tag questions used in casual conversation, from some relevant studies**

Tag questions used in casual conversation						Tag questions used in the academic context		
Holmes 1984 (based on Coates & Cameron, 1989, p. 85)			Survey of English Usage (SEU), Cameron, McAlinden & O'Leary (based on Coates & Cameron, 1989, p. 85)					
Types of tag questions	Male	Female	Types of tag questions	Male	Female	Types of tag questions	Male	Female
<b>Modal</b> (speaker oriented)	24	18	<b>Modal</b> (speaker oriented)	24	9	<b>Information seeking</b> (speaker oriented)	4	6
<b>Affective</b> (addressee Oriented)			<b>Affective</b> (addressee Oriented)			(addressee / audience oriented)		
<b>Facilitative</b> (positive politeness)	10	30	<b>Facilitative</b> (positive politeness)	36	27	<b>Responsive</b> (positive politeness)	13	12
<b>Softener</b> (negative politeness)	5	3	<b>Softener</b> (positive politeness)	—	—	<b>Softener</b> (positive politeness)	—	—
<b>Conformative</b>	—	—	<b>Conformative</b>	—	—	<b>Conformative</b>	269	279
<b>Total</b>	39	51	<b>Total</b>	60	36	<b>Total</b>	286	297

Even though the circumstances under which the comparisons are made vary in context (one being casual conversation and the other academic context) there does seem to be some similarities in form and function. In terms of form, the types of tag questions used in casual conversation and in the academic context can be divided into two main categories - speaker oriented and addressee- or audience-oriented. In terms of function, modal tag question and information seeking tag question both function to fulfil the uncertain state of mind of the speaker. In other words, they help the speaker to become informed or certain about something she or he was uncertain of. Additionally, in terms of function, both facilitative tag question and responsive tag question invite the addressee or audience to respond as a polite gesture for them to participate in the discourse or interaction. The addressee or audience may not always respond in such a circumstance but by using a facilitative or responsive tag question the speaker gives them the opportunity to do so. Using such tag questions portrays the positive politeness of the speaker by enhancing the solidarity of the interaction or discourse. The softener tag question is also audience-oriented, which helps the speaker to soften or diminish a face-threatening act or statement. The conformative tag question may also be categorised in the audience-oriented division because the speaker requests the agreement of the audience with what she or he is saying without providing them an opportunity to respond or disagree. Using this type of tag question, the speaker, by acknowledging the presence of the audience takes their acknowledgement for granted.

In terms of gender specific use of tag questions, table 6 suggests that in casual conversation men used more modal tag questions than women in the study conducted by Holmes (1984, in Coates & Cameron, 1989) and the study conducted by Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary (in Coates & Cameron, 1989) using the London Survey of English Usage (SEU). The results from this study (Table 6) suggest that women used slightly more information seeking tag questions than men in the academic context. In Holmes' study, women used more facilitative tag questions than men while for the SEU data it was vice versa.



In the gender-specific use of responsive tag questions the difference is marginal, but the results seem to be inclined towards the SEU findings. The other two audience-oriented tag questions, namely the softener and the conformational, were not comparable as they or their equivalents were not found in all the studies being compared.

The data from the recordings of this study seem to indicate that the types of tag questions that are most frequently used in the academic context by the members of both gender are *conformational*, *responsive* and *information seeking* tag questions (See Appendix I—Tables 3 and 4-). The *conformational* tag question functions to request the agreement of the audience or addressee;

#### F14—Transcription—34

- 3# S I'm going to enlighten you with some pic pictures  
 4# S is this familiar to you? — can you name the person in the picture?  
 5# S off course it's not new (someone ☺)  
 6# S it's the wedding of the century ↓↑ OK? (C)  
 7# S just tell me the , the the lady in the picture , I think everyone knows the lady ↑ right? (C) Lady Diana  
 8# S ((here now)) — is the crash of the year , of the century I can say that  
 9# S and — the funeral of the century  
 10# S they are three things happened in the century the wedding , the car crash and the funeral

the responsive to invite response from the audience or addressee;

#### F8—Transcription—28

- 28# S as Cheris Kramarae in 1981 says that women can take control ((this knowledge of the language)) and thus becoming emancipated becoming from the patriarchal domination  
 29# S now how do we do that?  
 30# S in order to do that we must analyze and better understand sometimes the subtle , the subtle errrrrr forms of linguistic er domination that you have for example over there  
 31# S the samples that you have ↓↑ OK? (C) this is very much er related now that brings me to CD CDA ↑ yea? (C) ((we a)) very much related to CDA because CDA ((goes)) to empower people ↓↑ OK? (C)  
 32# S so by understanding by analyzing the subtle form of this linguistic domination errrrrrrm we can give women the empowering image — because now as we can see their identities have been shaped erm by the media , ↓↑ all right? (R)  
 33# S now the problem statement ↑ yea? (C)  
 34# S OK now — err we think that — OK we think that this errrrrrrr project this study on the oppression of women through the mass media is necessary especially now that social ills depict social ills are ((played)) in Malaysia and in which aaa aaaaaaa in the national news a last night the mass media was a blamed as the culprit behind all this social ills ↓↑ OK? (C)

and the information seeking to express uncertainty of the speaker:

#### M20—Transcription—20

- 50# S OK — OK back to the structure  
 51# S the structure is more to the montage because it's erm less clear and it need a lot of working out when you look at er Channel ↓↑ OK? (C)  
 52# S and erm after our discussion we feel like you know when you go to a party , OK when you meet those like erm high class people  
 53# S they really don't talk much they only have they only look ☺? the look  
 54# S I mean I don't know but this is from our own discussion ☺? our own interpretation our interpretation might be wrong but we feel it that way



55# S that's why the Cha Channel style is different they just go on the look ☹?

56# S and I think , I believe all of you the moment you look at these two adverts OK how do you feel when you look at Avon looking so ordinary? ☹?

57# S but when you look at Channel you feel that the class is there inside you ↑ right? (IS)

58# S am I wrong?

The *conformative* and the *responsive* are audience-oriented tag questions in the sense that they focus on the audience; the *conformative* takes for granted the acknowledgement or agreement of the audience while the *responsive* as a form of polite gesture provides an opportunity for the addressee or audience to respond. In both instances the speaker is quite certain of his or her opinion or idea put forward, but the *responsive* tag question by inviting the audience to respond is seen as an act of positive politeness<sup>8</sup>. In this respect the *responsive* tag question is similar to what Holmes (1984) terms as *facilitative* tag question. The *information seeking* tag question is speaker-oriented in the sense that the speaker is uncertain or doubtful regarding the opinion of the audience or whether they have understood him or her. In such a circumstance the speaker seeks the explanation or opinion of the audience in order to clarify his or her state of uncertainty or doubt. This type of tag question is termed by Holmes (1984) as *modal* and later as *epistemic modal* (Holmes, 1995) tag question which helps the speaker become certain about something she or he was uncertain about. Along with the functions mentioned above, tag questions may also be used to express threat, anger, suspicion, sarcasm and irony.

With regard to the relationship between the use of tag questions and confidence level of a speaker (Table 7), it seems that most of the respondents were motivated by their own specific understanding of a variety or some varieties of tag questions. For instance, most of those who felt that the use of tag questions gave them confidence or boosted their level of confidence probably thought of tag questions that invited people to respond (*Responsive*), or gave them confidence due to the agreement of the audience (*Conformative*). These same types of tag questions often help to make interaction easier in the academic context, by reducing the gap between the speaker and the listener and by helping to build a relationship with the audience, which in turn promotes audience participation. Conversely, those who felt that tag question use reduced their confidence level may have thought of the use of tag question as expressing uncertainty (*Information Seeking*). Then again, those who sometimes felt confident and sometimes uncertain, depending on the situation, may have been thinking of conformative, responsive and information seeking tag questions. However, in general, the responses seem to imply that the use of tag questions motivates and boosts the confidence level of people using them in the academic context.

The data from the questionnaire suggest that in the academic context, the use of tag question motivates speakers in different ways, as a result of which they feel confident to a certain extent (Table 7). This finding seems to go against Lakoff's view (1975) regarding tag questions. According to her, the tag question is a feature of what she calls "women's language" and women by using them more frequently than men present themselves as weak and tentative, lacking confidence in what they say. However, the finding of this study seems to suggest that more women than men felt that the use of tag questions in the academic arena made them feel confident. These results address research question number 3.

<sup>8</sup>Sociable behaviour expressing warmth towards an addressee is positive politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987, in Holmes, 1995, p. 5).



**Table 7: Gender specific comparison of the responses to question 4 (Appendix IV) of Questionnaire**

Questi on No.	Summary of Response	Male	Female	Total
4.	Feels confident / boosts confidence	11	15	26
	Reduces confidence	1	1	2
	Sometimes confident and sometimes uncertain, depending on the context	6	3	9
	No effect <sup>9</sup>	9	11	20
	No effect, style of speaking <sup>10</sup>	7	2	9
	Style of speaking	4		4
	Reconfirm what is said, seek understanding from audience, get feedback	0	1	1
	Gives confidence because tag questions act as politeness strategy	1	0	1
	Being subtle (by use of tag questions) does not mean low level of confidence	0	1	1
	Feels confident and makes interaction interesting rather than dull	0	1	1
	Helps to elicit response from students / audience	0	1	1
	Increases confidence level, helps to generate response and detect audience's level of concentration	0	1	1
	Helps to monitor teaching-learning situation	0	1	1
	Increases confidence by reducing gap between speaker and listener	0	1	1
	Boosts confidence level and promotes participation from audience	0	1	1
	Increases confidence, builds relationship with audience	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>		40	40	80

From a general perspective, when comparing the findings of this study with that of other studies, it should be remembered that this study was specifically confined to the academic context at the tertiary level, whereas Lakoff generalized her finding from speech culled from television commercials, situation comedies, her own speech as well as that of her companions. Keeping this in mind, it could be said that the findings of this study seem to suggest that women use slightly more tag questions than men. This seems to support Lakoff's (1975) claim, which is women use tag questions more frequently than men. However, the difference between male and female use of tag questions in the academic context is so marginal that it would seem inappropriate to say that the frequency of use of tag questions depends on gender rather on the individual.

The most common forms of tag questions used compared to other types (see Figure 1) are the *conformative*, *responsive* and *information seeking*, which function to request the agreement of the audience, to invite response from the audience and to express uncertainty, respectively. The responsive tag question is similar to Holmes' (1984) *facilitative* tag question while the information seeking tag question is equivalent to her *modal*, which she later categorised as *epistemic modal*.

<sup>9</sup>The use of tag questions has no effect on their confidence level.

<sup>10</sup>The use of tag questions has no effect on their confidence level. Their use in the academic context is merely a style of speaking (i.e. while delivering a lecture or making a presentation).



In the academic context, tag questions generally help to generate positive attitudes in order to encourage oral participation, rather than to act as a negative force and hinder participation. This finding seems to go against Lakoff's (1975) claim that implied tag questions are used by people who have less than full confidence in the truth of the claim that they state. In fact, the findings suggest that not only did most of the respondents say that the use of tag questions made them feel confident but also more of the female respondents than men felt confident.

### 5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, it could be said that in the academic arena, members of both gender use various forms of tag questions, with women using them marginally more than men. Among the various types of tag questions that may be used to request the agreement of the addressee, invite response from the addressee, express threat, anger, suspicion, uncertainty, sarcasm and irony, the most frequently used (in academia) are the *conformative*, *responsive* and *information seeking* types. They function to serve specific purposes: to request the agreement of the audience, to invite response from the audience and to express uncertainty respectively. In most instances, the speakers feel that the use of tag questions boosts their level of confidence and creates a congenial atmosphere for interaction to take place.

The diverse findings of past research imply that the use of tag questions does not depend on any single factor but to a certain extent on various linguistic and extra-linguistic factors. In light of this and from the findings of the present study, it could be implied from a broad perspective that the use of tag questions in the academic context may be a part of academic discourse (lectures and presentations), irrespective of gender, which helps to monitor the teaching-learning situation. Of course this is debatable and further research of a broader scale may be necessary to substantiate any of the concluding remarks made in this paper. It must be mentioned that the intention of this study was not to prove or contradict any claim or hypothesis regarding the use of tag questions but rather to pave the way for further research, i.e. to explore the use of tag questions in different contexts or situations.

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## APPENDIX—I

Table 3: Types of tag questions used by females

Types of Tag Questions used	Females																				Total
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	F13	F14	F15	F16	F17	F18	F19	F20	
Conformative	10	35	18	8	42	10	3	18	20	1	26	0	1	9	6	13	25	11	20	3	279
Responsive	3	3	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Information seeking	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Total	13	38	19	9	48	10	3	19	21	3	26	0	1	9	6	13	25	11	20	3	297 (50.94%)

Where: F1, F2, ... = Female one, female two, ...

Table 4: Types of tag questions used by males

Types of Tag Questions used	Males																				Total
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20	
Conformative	1	6	16	16	7	34	19	20	31	3	17	3	26	3	13	8	13	6	13	14	269
Responsive	0	5	2	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	13
Information seeking	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	4
Total	1	11	18	16	7	35	20	20	32	3	17	3	26	3	13	8	19	6	13	15	286 (49.06%)

Where: M1, M2, ... = Male one, male two, ...



## Appendix II

## Key to Symbols of Transcription Annotation and Sample Transcriptions

L	lecturer
S / Ss	a student / students
Sx	another student
↓	fall
↑	rise
↓↑	fall-rise
↑↓	rise-fall
,	very brief silent pause
—	brief silent pause
---	longer than brief silent pause
* *	overlap / overlapping speech
(( ))	sub-audible speech
⊗ ?	inaudible
UPPERCASE	loudness
...	breaks off sentence / trend of thought, etc.
^ ^ ^	resumes or continues previous sentence / trend of thought, etc.
☺	laugh / laughs
?	question mark
1# 2# 3# etc.	paragraph
<b>bold?</b>	tag question
[N]	name of lecturer
[n]	name of student
[nx]	name of another student
[nxx]	name of third student
(C)	Conformative (tag question used to request the agreement of addressee / audience)
(R)	Responsive (tag question used to invite response of addressee / audience)
(IS)	Information seeking (tag question used to seek information from addressee / audience because speaker is uncertain)

## Excerpts from Sample Transcriptions

## F2—Transcription—22 (27# - 40#)

27# S one develop background knowledge when you ask them to write the the ⊗? use the schema theory — that means ((fixed)) topics are related with the students for example students in the village in the kampongs you cannot talk to them about hoe but they know ↓↑ **you know?** (C) of people working using the hoe in in the paddy field ↑ **yea?** (C) something like that

28# S and then we have to discuss it, model it, memorize it, memorize means like for example you ask student in writing their many ((acronyms like spades)) a spades like a s subject ah and then — erm subjects for the (referring to handout) can you see at the back there a a ((go back one)) ↑ **yea?** (C) emmmm ↓↑ **OK?** (R)

29# S and then you have www acronym we we you have L? they can write this on this acronym like w what when how when it takes place ↑ **yea?** (C) and the other one is tree t-r-e-e, a which is topic sentence a reasons ↑ **yea?** (C) and and then ((ending)) and everything ↑ **yea?** (C) you examine the reason and then you give the eh ending

30# S so a SRSD a a this this will be this will be the the the step they have the acronyms they have to memorize in order to write effectively (lecturer says something)



31# S yes emm and then when you come to support it support it means not only for the student for the for the teach a for the student teachers also have to go back to the @? and even among themselves they have to support each other @? ((no no like or you're your topics)) terrible what what are you writing about condemning each other there is no such thing because SRSD will not allow , it to happen ↑yea? (C)

32# S and then it is independent performance you are going to write whatever you want

33# S and then how do you do we evaluate s SRSD? yea

34# S a SRSD facilitates meaningful and ongoing assessment , a meaning that assessment is a ongoing , and whatever you asses has to be meaningful ((meaning that teacher that student)) they know what you're you're you're evaluating grading what you are being graded on ↓↑OK? (R)

35# S aaaa the nature of the SRSD itself like in interactive ↓↑you know? (C) they they interact with each other with the teacher then the the it is not a one way communication

36# S it's with with the teacher it's like a triangle kind of thing the teacher the student ((among themselves)) and the writer , ↑yea? (C) and the colla and the nature being collaborative also a allow teachers to asses changes in the effect that the emotional being of the student , for example in the beginning it doesn't like she or he doesn't like writing and then towards the end you know as as the (someone says something)

37# S yes as he progresses ((as a result as @? can see the change)) ↑right? (C) and in the behaviour ↓↑you know? (C) from the a a a a @? and now he starts talking ↓↑you know? (C) going around asking friends giving ideas and then and a behaviour and cognition also something to do with the brain I think , ↑yea? (R)

38# S the assessment can be carried out in many ways as follows , one you can involve aaaaaa involve students as co-evaluators not ((as)) the teacher even they they themselves check each other's work ↑yea? (C) , and then consider the level of evaluation in @? , and then a sex changes in performance attitudes and cognition this is the @?

39# S then asses how students actually use the strategy , how they use it ↑yea? (C) whether because it is a flexible , which one they use first you know whether they are , you can see that when they are doing a they're they're writing

40# S and them erm ---- asses student's use of @? over time and in new situations , and whether when it hey have finished one writing and you go on to the next one whether they are still doing it or not or or they have forgotten ↑yea? (C)

### F3—Transcription—23 (24# - 32#)

24# S so here we could say that gender is another factor which can influence a text comprehension

25# S so for the conceptual framework we look at Linda Flower's model , ↓↑OK? (C) which does not actually include schema and gender factors

26# S so I would like to replicate this model to include these two factors and investigate whether text interpretation is based on schema which is in turn related to gender differences ↓↑OK? (C)

27# S hope I'm making sense

28# S so my research quest , question here would be , does schemata influence text interpretation and do men and women interpret text differently ((within)) schemata ↓↑OK? (C) and the methodology is I'll give a text a narrative ↓↑OK? (C) the story of The Journey by it's a very short story by Shirley Lim she is a female writer

29# S so I'll give it to the respondents ↓↑OK? (C) a six respondents who are m who are master's undergraduates , a three being male and three being female

30# S so they are allowed to read it for 30 minutes and erm during the reading session no discussion is allowed , and erm a later I'll be admini administer a questionnaire as to how they comprehend the text what is their interpretation what is the message that they have derived at after reading the text and erm I'll a record their responses and analyze text interpretation and also verify if schema and genders influence text interpretation ↓↑OK? (C)



31# S now for the model --- this is the original version that was given to us ↓↑OK? (C) so here we have the writer the text and the reader , so it is actually the reader whose making new ⊗? a getting meaning from the text

32# S so the reader's mental representation and the writer's could differ ↓↑OK? (C) so I would like to replicate by adding these two --- factors here which is actually the schema the background knowledge and the gender of the reader as well as the writer y

#### F5—Transcription—25 (39# - 50#)

39# L so — let's look at some examples

40# L you have a research hypothesis ((with)) average score of twelfth graders is grater than the average score of ninth graders ...

41# L we're still on the same example I don't I'm not changing examples ↓↑OK? (C) so that you you see the difference ↓↑all right? (C)

42# L ^ ^ ^ so the average score of twelfth graders is **GREATER** than the average score of ninth graders on the A B C memory test and this is a directional hypothesis

43# L right you go back and look at your first one which says the average score of ninth graders is different from the average score of twelfth graders on the A B C memory test , it's non-directional ↑right? (C) because we didn't specify **HOW** how different it's going to be , what is the nature of the difference if **NOT** specified , but , you know directional hypothesis you find that the direction **IS** specified , the nature **L? HOW** difference ((it's)) going to be , greater , you've seen that the twelfth graders are going to be far , greater in performance than the — the score of the twelfth graders is going to be far grater than ((score)) from the ninth graders , so we're specifying a ((different)) ⊗?

44# L we are hypothesizing , that it's going to happen ↓↑all right? (C) but when you carry out the study and our hypothesis is prove is proved wrong or is rather found to be not true then you'll have to reject the hypothesis ↓↑all right? (C)

45# L so the direction of the difference between the two groups is ((specified)) ↓↑all right? (C)

46# L so your non-directional , if you carry out a study and you **FOUND** that there **IS** a difference , you can see a great difference then you accept the hypothesis and you reject the , hypothesis — ↓↑all right? (IS) — ↑follow? (IS)

47# L no — what's happening here is that once it's hypothesizing a your your hypothesizing that one group is going to be the performance ((is)) going to be grater than the other — so , one is hypothesized to be grater than the other , ↓↑all right? (C) so ((your two group)) ⊗? ↓↑OK? (C)

48# L so directional hypothesis is ⊗? can take the form of A ⊗? grater than B — or B grater than — than A , ↓↑OK? (IS) , ↑follow? (IS)

49# L any questions up to this point ? — clear now ? — OK ? all right

50# L what's happening when you have aaaaaa aaaaaa non-directional hypothesis ?

#### M3—Transcription— 3 (1# - 15#)

1# S \* \* ⊗? (everyone ⊗) OK the the theory that I'm going to discuss erm is actually founded on Flower's theory , and erm much of of what has been said and discussed erm has got some baring to what I'm going to discuss or shared with you

2# S errrrr at the end of this errrrr sharing ↓↑OK? (C) at the end of this presentation erm just tell me tell just tell me or share with me erm the appropriate level ↓↑OK? (C) a this instrument or or this test ↓↑you know? (C) can be carried out ↓↑OK? (R)

3# S now the er , the theory — that I'm gonna share , is this , ↓↑OK? (C) , founded upon a er erm Flower's theory , Vygotsky er 1981 says that reading is acquired through social , collaborative and interactive interaction

4# S it's an interactive interaction

5# S now elaboration



6# S now recent advances in the field of sociolinguistics, sociology of education, cognitive psychology have led to new directions in the study of reading, and research in these areas has examined a variety of factors related to the definition and acquisition of literacy skills and processes, facts interpretation, erm acquisition of knowledge about written instruction

7# S but underlying this work is a concept of reading as number one both cognitive linguistic process and two, social process

8# S now, while the collective a cognitive linguistic view of reading is generally accepted, being conceptualization of reading as a social processes only being accepted recently

9# S but although recent too related but distinct relations are emerging and within the first direction reading is viewed as a cognitive linguistic process embedded in and influenced by social processes

10# S and some of these social factors identified include, the print setting or the context, the teacher instructional orientation ↑right? (C)⊗? the teacher instruct where the teacher teaches what her or his intonation, what's her or his orientation ↓↑OK? (C) her style of teaching her manner of questioning, participant's frame of reference, organizational task, structure ↓↑OK? (C) how the reading teacher structures her task or organizes her task and ((fifthly)) communicative demands within instructional settings, ↑right? (C)

11# S if there is a ⊗? students will read ↓↑all right? (C) depending on the task

12# S now within the second direction reading is viewed ↓↑OK? (C) — reading is viewed as a social activity in which acts of reading are used by participants to indicate, to indicate group membership, to share information, to acquire status or position — or to establish social interactions

13# S now for assignment we're going to look into the theoretical constructs involved in viewing reading as a cognitive linguistic process embedded in social context with emphasis on the participant's frame of reference ↑all right? (C)

14# S so interestingly erm [n] errrrr and [nx] have both mentioned something on the schema theory or the schemata and the background theory a the background knowledge ↓↑all right? (C)

15# S so now let's examine some texts that aaa many people would find difficult

#### M6—Transcription—6 (31# - 46#)

31# S so instructors or teachers should be patient and reassuring

32# S errrrrr they should not be ↓↑all right? (C) teachers or instructors should not be er going into details ((off course)) at the initial stage, ↑right? (C) they should go step by step not rush into things ↑yea? (C) like finish off a particular topic, in ESP ↓↑all right? (C)

33# S they should encourage students to be critical, not just accepting ((that's)) as given ↓↑you know? (C) they must be able to ask questions get er response from the teacher, and and they work in groups or in pairs ↓↑all right? (C) they should be able to erm analyze things, ↓↑all right? (C) analyze things and erm give answers erm which is practical ↓↑all right? (C)

34# S erm — they should also create new and conflictive meaningful pattern of themes ⊗?

35# S as for the students — they should not be self centred they should not think of themselves alone, ↓↑all right? (C) they should work together in a group as a community for the benefit of their community

36# S and a they should not be dependent on teachers, they should be independent

37# S so here they are trying to the teachers are trying to teach that way

38# S errrrrr students have to learn ((in other words)) learner centred

39# S and since they are going to future trainers themselves they should think and act as teachers, not as students ↓↑all right? (C) so in this way they are actually building up their confidence as future ESP trainers

40# S all right approaches and methods advocated in the teaching of ESP from the training perspective

41# S right for theeeee teachers or instructors, what they can do is they can apply the ((circulative)) type of questioning ↓↑all right? (C) it's one of the approach or methods

42# S they can put students in situations and get response ↓↑all right? (C) so er here we supplying situational based errrrrr approach using a situational based approach and trying to get a response from the students ↓↑all right? (C)



43# S and then aaaa we have to give time to students for thought and discussion , give them time to think , give them time to discuss but not rush through the a a a particular topic or a subject er sorry a particular topic er erm sub-topic or whatever↓↑all right? (C)

44# S so students should be given time to discuss so that we can get a feedback from them

45# S right one of the , approaches or methods used with a , a , teacher training in Chili ((Institute of Santiago, it's the theme teaching method)) ↓↑all right? (C) so when we apply the them teaching method we find that it it adds variety to a lesson , ↓↑all right? (C)

46# S then we are sharing our ☺ ? because it's a teamwork ↓↑all right? (C) so here we are talking in terms of , the teachers — sharing responsibilities ↓↑all right? (C)

**M17—Transcription—17 (41# - 60#)**

41# L OK let's look at the eh \* \* ☺ ?

42# L [n] [nx] and [nxx] (starts looking at first draft of an assignment)

43# L ((you got a copy ↓↑have we? (IS) ))

44# L can we like get together

45# L ((OK are you ready))

46# L I think OK what we are doing now is to look at every page and comment on , whatever you , see fit ↓↑OK? (C) and ☺ ? make sincere and honest comments because , because we want ☺ ? ((we don't want)) to make any mistakes ☺ ? but before I forget ((I'll let you know)) first and foremost ah — we have the graphic person , graphic artist ↓↑OK? (C) so aaaa he's with us here ☺ ? ↓↑OK? (C) erm but what we ask from you is to make sure that — you don't have any bullets ↓↑OK? (C) and you don't have to put any boarders — or any special er — symbols ↓↑you know? (C)

47# L if you need anything to be done erm ☺ ? just ☺ ? ((I'd like you to)) bla bla bla here — ((have a picture of the whatever it is)) — ↓↑OK? (C) but if you have picture it must be clipart — ((then it's ready made that is))

48# L OK if you have a picture from the clipart collection , that's OK , but ah you don't have to — go ☺

49# L ma may be you can have ((as such)) if it is really necessary ((may be that's OK)) — ↓↑OK? (C) may be you can do a better job

50# L so you just have to ((make a little sacrifice — ah but remove all this boarders)) — makes his job easier — ↓↑OK? (R)

51# L are we OK with that? — eh

52# L aaa remove all bullets remove all the indentation — if you need anything ☺ ? ((that page just a put a star)) ☺ ? — ↓↑OK? (C) and em hopefully he'll be with us next week

53# L Saturday erm we go through the things together we can — then a we can ask you questions ☺ ? ↓↑OK? (C) so that ☺ ?

54# L all right ere let's look at ☺ ?

55# L OK the first page here we have the content page , are we going to have that ☺ ? — what about the ((others)) — do we have content page ((form)) ☺ ? \* \*

56# L yea (a student ask something) — yea ☺ ?

57# L err we can label it as section A B C — if it's OK? (IS) but a leave the bullets out — ↓↑OK? [n] (R)

58# L ((all right the next one is)) ☺ ? — what is it about? (students reply)

59# L ahhhhhh (student explaining) emm ☺ ? (another student says something and then ☺)

60# L ((may be you underline the sections that you have)) ↓↑all right? (C)



### Appendix III

#### QUESTIONNAIRE (Questions 1-2)

1. Do you use tag questions when lecturing / presenting in English in the academic context?

Frequently ☐

Never ☐

Sometimes ☐

2. Indicate the frequency with which you use tag questions to:

a. request the agreement of the addressee / audience

Frequently ☐

Never ☐

Sometimes ☐

b. invite response from the addressee / audience

Frequently ☐

Never ☐

Sometimes ☐

c. show uncertainty

Frequently ☐

Never ☐

Sometimes ☐

### Appendix IV

#### QUESTIONNAIRE (Question 4)

4. To what extent does the use of tag questions affect your confidence level?

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